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SUBJECT: DPRK: PRO-DIALOGUE DIET GROUP IN MINORITY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., James P. Zumwalt per 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Members of a non-partisan Diet group in favor of dialogue with the DPRK and a focus on denuclearization rather than abductions are urging the Obama Administration to stay with the Six Party process. In a meeting with the Charge, the group lamented that Japan's DPRK policy is controlled by the abductions issue and that this works to the detriment of Japan's national security. Although the 12 abductees remaining on Japan's official list are "likely dead," no one in Japan can publicly say this because of the intense public feelings about the matter, senior ruling party politician Taku Yamasaki said. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Charge met February 2 with leading members of the non-partisan North Korea Parliamentary League, a Diet group that supports dialogue with the DPRK and believes that Japan's focus should be on resolving the North Korean nuclear issue ahead of the abductions issue. In attendance were senior ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) faction leader Taku Yamasaki and LDP member Gen Nakatani, opposition Democratic Party (DPJ) members Yoshihiro Kawakami and Ryuichi Doi, Socialist Party member Tokushin Yamauchi, and senior Diet member (and New People's Party representative) Shizuka Kamei. The legislators agreed that the abductions issue had hijacked Japan's DPRK policy and that the Japanese people's "low interest" in North Korean denuclearization works to the detriment of Japan's national security.

¶3. (C) For most people, resolution of the abductions issue means that the 12 remaining abductees must return to Japan, Yamasaki explained. Unfortunately, MOFA has been "brainwashed" and is unable to push back against this. Any politician or senior official who "tells it like it is" -- namely, that the 12 abductees are "likely dead" -- will be called "cold-blooded" and pilloried by the press and public, Yamasaki said. "The issue is that big here," he added. Ironically, even in Yamasaki's own district in Nagasaki -- "a place where one would think interest in denuclearization would be high" -- "most voters are more interested in the abductions issue," Yamasaki lamented.

¶4. (C) Yamasaki acknowledged that there may be some "unofficial" abductees still alive and spoke anecdotally about Japanese sightings in Pyongyang over the years. Reporting on a conversation he had with a former Japanese abductee, Yamasaki recounted that the abductee had said that Japanese radio broadcasts to the abductees were "not helpful." "After a while," the abductee told Yamasaki, "we got used to living in the DPRK and accepted our fate...it compounded our hopelessness to hear Japanese broadcasts saying that our friends and families were waiting for us because there was nothing we could do. It would have been

better to hear that the Japanese authorities are coming to get us and that we should be waiting at a certain place at a certain time."

15. (C) Yamasaki and his colleagues urged the Obama Administration to continue to pursue North Korean denuclearization through the Six Party Talks. China and, to a lesser extent, Russia will be critical to resolving the nuclear issue, he said. Once the nuclear issue is resolved, then we can address the abductions issue. "In fact, Japan's role is so minimal at this point, you can leave us out," Yamasaki joked.

ZUMWALT